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Cashing In on Experience

When President Johnson recently named a number of ambassadors, only one professional politician, former Democratic national chairman Frank E. McKinney, was among the nominees. He goes to a rather minor post in Jamaica.

Otherwise the President continued a policy of selecting career officials for high governmental posts.

Of 50 ambassadorial appointments since Johnson took office, 36 have been career diplomats and 11 such experienced individuals as Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor in South Viet Nam and Angier Biddle Duke in Spain.

Including five Johnson appointments yet to be confirmed, career foreign service officers now head 78 of 112 embassies and two legations. This is a 68 per cent ratio of career officials compared to a 60 per cent average in recent years.

In seeking new appointees the President has naturally sought individuals with some philosophical identification with his Great Society, but he leans toward the advance of career personnel or toward middle-aged persons with broad experience in special fields, regardless of political affiliation.

A case in point was selection of retired Vice Adm. William F. Raborn as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Johnson noted that Raborn's two predecessors, John A. McCone and Allen W. Dulles, were both Republicans, but added: "I have never inquired into the admiral's politics but I do know something of his talents. That is why he was selected for this particular task."

Such an appointment policy leaves little ground for criticism.